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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a study undertaken by the British Ministry of Education to determine the effect of offering French to a much wider age and ability range at the elementary level than had been the case in the past. The study is based on the Nuffield project, a pilot project in French instruction carried out in selected primary schools in England and Wales in the 1964-65 academic year. Researchers investigated whether (1) other aspects of education and general intellectual development gain or suffer from the introduction of French instruction at the elementary level, (2) there are levels of ability below which the teaching of French is of dubious value, (3) any substantial gain in mastery is achieved by learning French at age 8, and (4) which methods, attitudes and incentives are most effective in promoting the learning of French, and (5) what organizational and teaching problems are posed by the introduction of French instruction in the elementary school. This document describes and criticizes the findings and identifies problems encountered in the pilot project. (CLK)

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British Elementary Schools and the Study of French: an Evaluation of the Nuffield Report

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This article is based almost entirely on a talk given in May 1975 at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers which was held in Edmonton.

By now most teachers of modern languages have already seen or have had drawn to their attention an article in the local newspaper describing the report of the British study which attempted to assess the results obtained by beginning oral French at the elementary school level: Clare Burstall, Monika Jamieson, Susan Cohen, and Margaret Hargreaves. Primary French in the Balance. Windsor, England: NFER Publishing Company, 1974.

The findings as reported in most of the newspapers that I have seen were very pessimistic and have already resulted in some school boards beginning to question their own French programs at the elementary school level. Let me hasten to assure you that, while the findings do not exactly constitute an overwhelming vote of confidence, there are more encouraging things that have come out of the study than its summary chapter (from which most newspapers drew their information) would have us believe.

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Background

Let me begin by outlining briefly the origins of the project. To do this, we'll go back to 1963 when the British Ministry of Education decided that a pilot project in French would be carried out in selected primary schools in England and Wales to begin in September 1964. The rationale underlying this decision was that up until this

point, modern languages in Britain had been offered on a rather restricted basis, largely to students in public (i.e. private) schools or to students at the secondary level. The Ministry wished to see what the effect would be of offering French to a much wider age and ability range than had been the case in the past.

As the researchers suggest, the selection of French as the language to be taught was made necessary by available staff resources; there could be no question of teaching German or Russian, to give but two examples. Even in the case of French it was to prove necessary to offer some form of preparation, since few of the elementary teachers were totally fluent or had had any form of training in modern language teaching methods. This was to prove to be the source of much trouble, a point which I shall develop at a later stage in this study. A third point was that continuity between elementary school and secondary school was to be ensured. Regrettably, while continuity was indeed ensured, articulation between the two levels was not.

The specific questions which the researchers proposed to study were the following (Burstall 1974, p. 240):

1. Do other aspects of education and general intellectual development gain or suffer from the introduction of French teaching in the primary(elementary) school?

2. Are there levels of ability below which the teaching of French is of dubious value?

3. Is any substantial gain in mastery achieved by beginning to learn French at the age of eight?

4. What methods, attitudes and incentives are most effective in promoting the learning of French?

5. What organizational and teaching problems are posed by the introduction of French teaching in the primary school?

Discussion of the Findings

I must say at the outset that I have only one major quarrel with the statistical analysis apart from one or two instances where rather broad interpretations are made, interpretations which I'll question at an appropriate point in this discussion. Rather, my major complaint is that some very positive facts come out of this study, but the casual reader who looks only at the summary chapter will never find out about these, since they are buried deep in the text in the early part of the book. Suppose we look at the findings that arise from question one to give you some idea of what I mean.

At the elementary school level, the researchers divided this question into two important sub-questions:

a) Did taking French with the resulting need to take time from other subjects have any injurious effect on the basic work in English and Mathematics? and

b) Did working with a second language have any transfer to work in English?

With respect to the first sub-question the findings parallel a great deal of the earlier research in North America - there was no loss of achievement in those subjects. I have a personal theory based on my own experience that when teachers lose a certain number of minutes from a given subject period, they merely tighten up their teaching practices and use the remaining time more effectively. (I suppose that the opposite would be true in the eighty minute semester period.)

In the case of the second sub-question again, no real difference was found. My own feeling is that whatever transfer there may have been came in the form of greater insight of a kind that would not show up too readily on a standardized test in English.

The answer to question one, then, as Burstall and her co-workers suggest, is that at the elementary school level, there is neither profit nor loss (p. 242). Let me make myself clear. I am in complete agreement with their findings on this question as far as they went. Regrettably, there is another sub-question to which they did not refer in the summary, but which was discussed in the body of the text. (In fairness I must point out that I am the one who has formulated this question, but in view of my work with the Second Languages Committee of the Department of Education in the Province of Alberta, I feel that it is an important one.) The question is the following:

c) Is there evidence of a positive attitude towards France and speakers of French at the end of the elementary stage of the program?

Whatever we may think of the various linguistic skills, I am sure that we are all in agreement as to the need for cultural understanding however it may be achieved. It is this point of view that has prompted the Alberta Department of Education to place as the very first objective of its modern language programs, cultural understanding. What does the study have to say about this important feature of modern language teaching?

First the summary. The only information that we are given here is the following: the researchers suggest in one place that pupils are highly motivated to put "their French to the test in a real-life situation," (p.245) and later, "Positive attitudes towards France and the French. . . tend to be associated with a high level of achievement in French...." This last comment leaves the newspaper reader with the very strong impression that only a small handful came out of the elementary school with any sort of positive attitude.

However, if we read through the main body of the study, we find the following statement which presents a much more positive picture. "The majority of the Cohort 3 (i.e., the third experimental group) pupils agreed that the acquisition of oral fluency, with a view to establishing contact with French-speaking people, was the most important aspect of learning French. *Whether they like French or not*, (italics mine) the majority of the sample wanted to visit France and meet some French people." (p.58) We in Canada would give a great deal to have the same kind of impact on our students with our French programs, yet nowhere in the summary chapter is this very important finding given much prominence, except in a rather off-hand manner.

In fairness, there were some very severe problems encountered. The planners of the project had hoped that the introduction of French in the elementary school level would produce greater interest in the study of modern languages at the next level of instruction. Unfortunately, this is not what happened. As the summary suggests (p. 242):

> "...the early introduction of French had tended to exert a negative effect on the teaching of other foreign languages: It had reinforced the position of French as the dominant foreign language taught in our schools and it had increased the number of pupils who reached the secondary school convinced that further foreign language learning was not for them."

Common sense should have indicated that an introduction to any language at the elementary level would give that language a dominant position in secondary school. In fact, by ensuring continuity, the planners of the project had brought this about. What the study does not tell us is whether or not it was in fact possible for a student to take a third language along with French owing to the demands of the timetable. It may not have been. In any case, teachers of languages other than French certainly had reason to complain. As the head of one comprehensive school suggests, "While the school was an 11 to 18 comprehensive we were able to introduce German and Russian at second-year level, with Spanish and

Latin also strongly established. In the last three years Latin and Russian have disappeared, Spanish is surviving with difficulty and German is under heavy pressure." (p.182). (As an aside, I'd say that his programs were over-extended before the pilot pupils ever appeared.)

There is some inconsistency in the second part of the finding, namely, that a number of students came to secondary school convinced that further foreign language study was not for them. This is true on a percentage basis, but in actual fact, the pilot project had drastically increased enrolments in modern languages in many secondary schools to the point where staffing had become a very real problem, the secondary modern schools being most affected by the staffing problems, the comprehensives to a lesser extent, and the grammar schools apparently rarely, if at all. The authors also stress that in the secondary moderns French was either, and here I quote the study, "initiated or revived only in response to the need to cater for the incoming pupils." This does not seem to suggest a strong, viable, well-planned and well-taught program in modern languages. If an elementary school student was feeling the least little bit queasy about his ability in French it would appear that he had little help coming from the French staff, the very staff, incidently, who would later complain about the shortcomings of these same students. Here is what headmasters of some secondary moderns have to say about their own programs:

> "Our experience of the scheme was coloured above all by our staffing problems. We were handicapped from the start and certainly if I had been able to opt out, I should have done so, for I had grave doubts about our ability to do it justice. For lack of applicants I had dropped French for a year or so before the first cohort arrived. To cope with it, a member of staff volunteered who had not taught French before. As numbers grew, the overflow went to another colleague who, though willing, was never frank about his limitations. Only towards the end was the position bettered." (p.174)

Another headmaster reports: (ibid)

> "In common with many other schools, staffing has been the real stumbling-block here, and there has been no continuity at all throughout the duration of the project. All heads of department appointed during my period as headmaster here, i.e., since 1967, have moved on to promotion."

Comments such as the above, together with the fact that staffing had been a major problem in the secondary moderns and to some extent in the comprehensives cast doubt on some of the findings of the entire project. While there can be no doubt about the sincerity of

the people involved, what is required in a situation of this kind is practical understanding of second language learning and teaching practices.

The problem was not much better at the primary level. In staffing these schools, the two alternatives that seemed to be open to the planners, given the shortage of trained staff, were either to use the existing classroom teacher and teach her French, or to bring in French-speaking specialists who were not elementary-trained. Those in charge, for very good reasons, elected to take the first of the two options.

Unfortunately, not all of the re-trained elementary teachers proved to be successful, a point that the researchers make as they offer some comments about the problem (p. 183):

> "The major deficiencies I would lay at the door of the training scheme which attempted to turn primary school teachers, with insufficient linguistic background, into language teachers in six months. It is remarkable that where children have been taught by native French speakers or teachers highly qualified in French, during the primary years, far greater knowledge is achieved; much of course depends on the quality of teaching in the primary schools. Teachers with insufficient linguistic background and lacking in inspiration may do more harm than good...Usually the better teachers have produced a groundwork which provides a base and a springboard for continued effort and success. The difficulty in the secondary school is to draw the strands together to form a working unit. Teachers vary so much that the pupils they teach arrive with considerable variations in their standards... It must be agreed that many primary teachers have given their pupils an excellent start in the language. Honesty would also compel one to admit that there must be many teachers who have been persuaded to "have a go" at the subject in spite of their own diffidence and lack of confidence. . . Such criticisms could doubtless be levelled at any subject, but it would seem regrettable that in some cases we are extinguishing the desire of pupils to learn a foreign language before 11 instead of kindling enthusiasm... Some staff in junior schools are obliged to teach French though they admit they are not really competent. If the French is badly taught, children can build up poor attitudes to the subject and enter secondary schools with a preconceived dislike of French."

Apart from the question of linguistic competence, high staff turnover at the primary level was also thought to weigh against the success of the venture:

"The staff in some schools have remained fairly constant, with obvious benefit to the pupils, and also enabling useful contact to be made between primary and secondary levels, but in other schools the high turnover of staff has often meant that French has been the first subject to suffer... Staffing difficulties have led to much coming and going of teachers of many different kinds.... It appears that primary schools have trouble filling French vacancies. Often our new first-formers have complained of having lost a year's French at some stage."

It is a pity that some formal long-range training could not have been given to these teachers prior to their becoming involved in the project. The students themselves most often identify problems in comprehension as a reason for dropping out of the program, but until recently, many teachers failed to appreciate the very real importance of auditory comprehension in second language teaching, and these were trained people. What must the situation have been with untrained teachers? The amazing thing is that the researchers identify auditory comprehension as the one single area in which, at the end of eight years, the students in the experimental project come out ahead of the control group. I suppose that this really means that those who could comprehend stayed with the program; those who couldn't dropped out.

The planners of the program did try to provide workshop-type experience for those teachers involved. Unfortunately, the provision of workshops or similar limited forms of in-service usually serve only to provide a 'bag of tricks' as a recent conference held by the Center for Applied Linguistics has pointed out. To be useful, such workshops must be part of a carefully-structured series of experiences which will accomplish the same thing as in-depth course work. If this is not the case teachers come away from the workshop feeling that they are on top of the problem, when in fact they are not.

Other problems began with the students themselves. As the authors suggest, some children become potential dropouts right from the very first year, both as a result of the comprehension problem just mentioned, and for other reasons as well. Throughout the study the point is made that even the less able were capable of some fairly respectable achievement as long as the emphasis remained on the oral aspects of the language. Once the focus was switched to reading and writing, the same factors that had produced poor results in their other subjects came into play again, and they became potential dropouts, carrying their attitude toward the program over into secondary school.

A third reason for this type of attitude is given considerable

prominence in the body of the study, but is not referred to at all in the summary. The author stresses many times that comparison of pupils on the basis of parental occupation has revealed a consistently direct relationship between attitude and achievement on the one hand and parental occupation on the other. In view of the trouble that this might cause politically she probably had good reasons for omitting this from the summary. The fact remains, though, that parent occupation in terms of this study has been closely tied to subsequent achievement on the part of the pupil. Since many more children of lower socio-economic status were now involved in French than before, it would seem reasonable to expect some problems when they arrived in secondary school. This finding alone would seem to indicate a need to look into those factors that seem to tie socio-economic status and achievement. In the British context, however, entry into the Common Market may indicate to some parents that modern languages do have a greater role to play in their child's future than was the case when this study was begun.

In discussing the fact that girls seem to do better than boys, the researchers provide some interesting comments which are worth repeating here. They indicate that in the European (and I guess for that matter, North America) tradition, second language learning had been considered as a somewhat unmanly art. (I am pleased to be able to report in the limited research in which I have been engaged this year that there are signs that the boys are beginning to see practical advantages to being bilingual, and, as a result, enrolments are holding in some public schools.) The authors of this study feel that girls are encouraged at home to do well in modern languages. In addition, many of the girls expressed in the course of the survey a desire to work in an occupation that demanded bilingualism, such as an airline stewardess. Boys did not mention any employment demanding such proficiency. In other words, while the boys might have integrative motivation, there was very little in the way of instrumental motivation of a type external to the school. The authors suggest that with greater involvement in the Common Market, employment opportunities for boys might arise that would encourage them as well to learn a second language.

In connection with this same problem, the authors make a very interesting point. They mention that boys in general do less well than girls in reading with the exception of Germany. In Germany, unlike most other European and North American countries there are male teachers in great numbers in the lower elementary school grades. The result is that there is a model for the boy to identify with, and the marks come up as a result. The same situation may apply in French at the elementary school level. (My average methods class at this level - in other words, those who intend to teach French in elementary school-contains some thirty-five to forty students

of whom only about two are boys. In the same type of class at the secondary level, however, the two sexes are almost evenly distributed.) It's worth thinking about, especially in the light of the fact that boys in the experiment who were achieving poorly tended to drop out, while girls who were obtaining the same results remained. Maybe the boys were troublesome and were given some solid counselling advice to leave the program. It's happened before.

I guess what I am trying to say at this point is that if some students arrived in secondary schools with some rather unfortunate attitudes, there were excellent reasons for them. My complaint is that the research does not really bring these points into focus in the summary section, but merely dismisses the whole business of French in the elementary school with a contemptuous wave of the researcher's hand.

Problems in the Experimental Design

Another reason for the poor attitude of incoming students that was mentioned in the study may have something to do with their reception in the secondary school. I have already mentioned the headmaster's comment about his reluctance to take part in the program, but this is not the worst feature of the transition from elementary to secondary. It had been hoped that some form of streaming would be possible - that special programs might be provided for those with three years French in elementary school. This did not prove to be possible for a variety of reasons. Some schools did make the attempt for the second group of project students, but for the third, the attempt was abandoned almost without exception.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means that students with three years of French at the elementary school level on their arrival in secondary school were placed in classes for beginners. What is worse is that the programs appear to have been slanted toward the beginner instead of toward those with some experience. It would be helpful, however, to have more precise information about this, since practice probably varied from school to school. In any case it is not hard to imagine the effect that this would have on the experimental students who, in effect, had to begin all over again. This may appear to be a small thing - in fact it takes place all over Canada.

From a purely statistical point of view I am somewhat concerned about the fact that the control students for the experimental groups were, in fact, their fellow classmates in the secondary schools which had been selected to participate in the pilot project. The amount of cross-group contamination must have been considerable. One possible result might have been that Cohort 3 (the third experimental group) might have achieved less than they might have

done had they been placed in a streamed program of their own, and the so-called control groups might, in fact, have moved in the direction of the experimental groups. It is interesting that at least one teacher commented that after a year together in the same classroom, it was very difficult to tell which student belonged to the Control and which to the Experimental Group.

I think that at this point I'd like to discuss the experimental design of the study, and I should like to refer to the accompanying table showing the composition of experimental and control groups.

TABLE ONE Composition of the Experimental and Control Groups

Cohort 1 (Began French 1964)	Battery Two Tests
Cohort 2 (Began French 1965)	Control Group 1 (Tests administered June 1970) -Same age as experimental groups -Began French in Secondary -Different schools
Cohort 3 (Began French 1968)	Control Group 2 (Tests administered June 1973) -Same age as experimental groups -Began French in Secondary -Same schools as Experimental Group 3
	Control Group 3 (Tests administered June 1970) -Two years older than experimental groups -Same number of class hours of French
	Battery Three Tests
	Control Group 4 (Tests administered March 197 -Same age -Began French in Secondary -Same school as both Cohort 2 and Cohort 3
	Control Group 5 (Tests administered March 1973) -Same age -Began French in Secondary -Different schools

Table One illustrates one of the problems in the design of the study. With two exceptions at the secondary school level the

controls are found in the same classrooms as the experimental group. One of the exceptions is marred by representing only a part of the total possible external group, having been taken solely from the grammar schools - any difference between the two groups in secondary modern and comprehensive schools must pass unnoted. The interesting point that the researchers make is that they were unable to find a large enough control group outside the experiment to provide a comparison for these two types of school populations. Yet there are enough students in the experimental secondary modern and comprehensive schools to continue to make comparisons. Surely this must be counted as a positive finding for the project - the fact that it seemed able to hold children in French programs in these two types of schools when similar schools that did not draw from pilot programs were unable to do so.

I think that I have spent enough time on question one and by extension on question two, and should now like to take a look at the question which is really at the heart of the whole study, question three which asks,"Is any substantial gain in mastery achieved by beginning to learn French at the age of eight?"

The researchers report that "This question can be answered unequivocally in the negative (p. 243)." They continue:

> "Pupils taught French from the age of eight do not subsequently reveal any 'substantial' gains in achievement. By the age of 16, compared with those who are taught French from the age of 11, the only area in which the pupils taught French from the age of 8 consistently show any superiority is that of listening comprehension. Even here, the differences between the various groups of pupils, although statistically significant, are hardly of a substantial nature, being of the order of 2 - 4 points difference on a 28 - item test, a fairly minimal return for the extra years spent learning French in the primary school."

Given the way in which the project students were taught in the secondary school, and given the experimental design, I am surprised that there is any difference remaining at all. For all their faults, it certainly speaks highly for the dedicated people in the elementary schools who began the program. I must admit that here the researchers state the case as it is. However, I'd like to go back a few years now, and see what the situation was at the end of the first two years of secondary school. While there are other comparisons possible, in order to highlight a particular problem I'll discuss the relationship between Cohort 2 and Control Group 1 on the one hand, and Cohort 3 and Control Group 2 on the other; then cross-compare them as the authors did.

Control Group 1 and Cohort 2 were administered the Battery 2 French tests in June 1970. Both groups had been in secondary school for two years at this point, and were the same age. Obviously, Control Group 2 had had French for three years less than Cohort 2. The results should favour Cohort 2 and they do. In Reading, Listening, and Speaking the results are significantly better for Cohort 2. The same applies as well for Writing, but only as far as the girls are concerned; for the boys there is no difference.

It is important, in order to interpret what I am going to say next, to notice that students in this control group were not in the same schools as the experimental students. The control group was selected from eighteen comprehensive schools in an attempt to match the Cohort 2 pupils as closely as possible. The point to notice, however, is the clear superiority that exists in favour of the experimental students. When Cohort 3's results are matched against Control Group 1's results the same pattern is found. However, when Cohort 3 is matched against Control Group 2, in other words against students in its own classrooms, the result is not as clear. Since this second set of tests was able to separate out sex, occupation of parents, and type of school, I'll do the same. The results, then are as given in Table Two which follows:

Table Two - Cohort 3 vs. Control Group 2

(These students are the same age, but the Control class has only had French for two years at this point.)

Speaking - Sex and School type - no significant difference in either.
Listening - Sex - Favors Cohort 3.
Occ. - no difference for semi-and un-skilled categories.
'Professional and clerical' and 'skilled' favors Cohort 3.
School - Grammar and Secondary Modern favor Cohort 3.
No difference in comprehensives.
Reading - Sex - Boys favor control group; girls no difference.
Occ. - Semi-skilled favors control group.
Skilled and unskilled no difference .
Professional and clerical favors Cohort 3.
School - Grammar favors Cohort 3; others no difference.
Writing - Sex - Boys favor Cohort 3; girls no difference.
Occ. - Semi-skilled favors Control; others no difference.
School - Grammar favors Control; others no difference.

As a cross-check, if Cohort 2, some three years earlier, is compared with Control Group 2, the results are somewhat better, since Cohort 2 shows superiority in Speaking and Listening, almost complete

superiority in Reading, and loses out completely to the Control Group in Writing. I should like to think that this is the kind of result that might have been obtained from Cohort 3 if they had been compared with a class with which they had not been in daily contact, and if they had had the chance to work in a streamed situation even during the first two years.

Since it was obviously impossible to find an exact control group for the experimental students, the planners of the research did the next best thing, taking, as we have seen above, one group of controls who were matched for age, but not for exposure to French, and a second group who were ostensibly matched for exposure, but who were some two years older than the experimental groups. I say ostensibly, because while they had taken French for the same number of classroom hours, Cohort 2's exposure had taken place over an eight year period and the Control Groups over a much more compressed period of time. While this may or may not have had any effect, the authors themselves readily admit the advantages of age. (p. 122)

> "Carroll (1963) has suggested that one of the most important variables in the learning process is the total amount of time spent actively in the learning situation. If to this suggestion is added the assumption that the older learner has developed more efficient strategies than the younger, there is no need to seek further for a consistent interpretation of the bulk of the available evidence."

Are the researchers right in suggesting that the only area in which the experimental group has shown unquestioned superiority is in the area of listening comprehension? If we take the results and only the results, and ignore the other factors, I suppose that they probably are. Let me suggest, however, that the designers of the study must share a very real part of the blame if this is the case. By failing to ensure a better articulation between the two levels, by failing to ensure that the secondary schools would in fact build upon the strengths by providing a form of streaming, they set the stage for this finding to take place. At least the researchers are honest enough in the body of the text to admit that these things happened. My only concern is that given the matter of fact way in which this is reported, I'm not totally sure that they understood the implications of what they were saying. Since this appears to be the case we ourselves have an obligation to draw people's attention to some of the statements contained in the body of the text and not allow a casual perusal of the summary chapter to serve as one's sole basis for deciding upon the fate of elementary French programs.

Questions four and five have already been touched on in one

way or another during this discussion, and I do not propose to spend time on them at this point. Rather I prefer to return to the concluding paragraph of the Summary chapter.

> "Now that the results of the evaluation are finally available, however, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the weight of the evidence has combined with the balance of opinion to tip the scales against a possible expansion of the teaching of French in the primary school." (p. 246)

This is the point of view of a researcher; it is most definitely not the point of view of a classroom teacher. The latter takes research findings, and, after some soul-searching, tries to improve on the situation which produced them. This is what I hope to accomplish in the next few lines.

Problem One

At the end of their first year in the pilot project, 75% of the pupils were found to be very much in favour of learning French. By the end of their third year in the program, however, those in favour had sunk to a bare majority. From comments made throughout the study, the answer would seem to lie in lack of comprehension, dislike of endless repetition, and the learning of set patterns - patterns which the secondary teachers felt the students were unable to adapt to other situations.

All of this adds up to a very real need to provide better forms of teacher training. Such training should both precede and accompany the implementation of any new program. Precede, since the teachers in most cases are still not aware of the problems which they will encounter, and they can be prepared for some of them; accompany their daily teaching as they uncover new problems in the course of each lesson. Moreover this training must be sequential in nature so that each workshop or in-service session builds logically on the sessions that preceded it.

From at least one point of view, the training of the elementary school teacher of modern languages is even more critical for us as a group than that of secondary school teachers, since faulty teaching at the elementary level may very well result in turned-off children and inadequate learning, both of which in their turn will produce low enrollment in the secondary school. This is one reason why in our kindergarten immersion programs in Edmonton we are insisting on a very high level of teacher competence. Modern language teaching

and learning is too critical a matter in present-day Canada to turn over to any well-meaning individual who just happens along.

Problem Two

Teachers at the secondary level complained about the lack of competence of incoming students in the areas of reading and writing. It may be that no attempt should have been made at the elementary school level to deal with Writing other than as a copy activity to facilitate the acquisition of Reading skills. In this way the secondary teachers would have realized that it was entirely their problem. If students at the elementary level had been allowed to fall into bad habits it would be only natural that they would resist any attempt to change them when they arrived in secondary school. What is worse, the more they were attached to their elementary school teacher, the more they would consider any attack on the skills which she had taught them as a personal attack on her. The process is too well known to warrant further comment here. Let me suggest again that there was a very real need for the secondary school to build on the existing skills and attitudes of the incoming students which were not inconsiderable. One has only to read the comments made by the inspectors at the elementary school level. This does not seem to have been done. In brief, there was a great need for program articulation, something which apparently did not take place.

Problem Three

While I am not able to determine the exact numbers entering a given school, it would seem to me that if most of what the British call a 'catchment area' came from the pilot program, and a smaller number entered with no French at all, it would seem more reasonable to have set up the program in such a way that the incoming non-French students were fed into the pilot program rather than the other way around. My own experience has been that such students catch up rather well. (As a matter of interest, I am such a student myself.) It is only too obvious that this was not done - the non-French students were to provide the control groups - a process which I have already singled out as being the biggest error in the design of the study.

Ideally there should have been separate streams, since many of the pilot students do comment on being held back by beginners. For very good sociological reasons which are pointed out in the study, this was not possible. With what we know about individualized instruction today, here is a situation tailor-made for a grouping process such as many writers, myself included, have described in the literature.

Problem Four

The study would seem to indicate either that the specific goals were not too-well defined in the beginning, or that these goals were not accepted by the secondary schools involved. This is a common problem. Here in Alberta we have just finished defining in some detail the specific competences expected at each level of learning. The clear statement of such goals prevents a great deal of misunderstanding. For both the receiving and preparing institutions they represent, assuming a form of mastery teaching, a clear statement of the job that is to be done on the one hand, and the state of the student's preparation on the other. After completing my first reading of the study I feel that the secondary schools expected too much, and were disappointed. It is not enough that one level of teachers participate in program goals. All those who will ultimately be involved in the teaching process must participate in the preparation of these goals and must be prepared to subscribe to them.

In summary then, the main problems of this study appear to have been lack of definition of program goals, and failure to communicate what goals there were to all those involved. A second problem was a failure to provide for better program articulation which, of course, stems from the first. A third arose from failure to anticipate staffing problems at both levels of instruction, and to provide appropriate training beyond a very minimal level.

Conclusion

In the previous pages I have been talking about a program in Britain. I could just as easily have been describing many programs in our own country. We owe a very real debt of gratitude to the men and women who embarked upon this very imaginative scheme, and then were honest enough to tell us about the things that went wrong. This still does not mean that we should blindly accept the final recommendation that we close up shop at the elementary school level. Rather, like Scrooge in Dicken's story, we have had a chance to look at the past, the present, and the future, and now may have a better picture of the changes that we must make. We still have a chance to mend our ways before our own massive testing program reveals to the world some of our deficiencies.

This article is based almost entirely on a talk given in May 1975 at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers which was held in Edmonton.